

MSC 2020**International Scientific and Practical Conference «MAN. SOCIETY.
COMMUNICATION»****RELIGIOUS AND ATHEISTIC IN THE MODERN
INFORMATION-DIGITAL SPACE**

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Abstract

The twentieth century highlighted a number of specific aspects of the relations of the phenomena of religion and atheism, the roots of which can be traced back to antiquity. Poets of antiquity created poetic images that give examples of various manifestations of “theomachy” (godlessness, the battle of the immortals). People were endowed with the property “ὕβρις” (“impudence”, “pride”), which allowed some of them to acquire the status of a “hero-godless fighter”, speaking on the side of some “immortals” against others, up to an attack on the gods themselves. In the 1st century BC within the framework of Roman philosophical thought, the concept of “religio” was separated from “atheos” as good from evil for a part of the elites of society. In the 19th century, publicists write about “atheists” in bursa and seminaries, and from the end of the 20th century on “Orthodox atheism”, “evangelical atheism”, etc. The modern digital space is a special fertile ground for myth-making processes. This paper discusses how digital space produces the genesis of the latest artificial mythologies that initiate a new dialectical relationship between atheism and theism. In addition, it has been established that this space becomes the basis upon which a new concept of the individual, including oneself, is built, forming in his mind a surrogate of the feeling of his own “sacredness”. It was also revealed that practical space, unlimited in possibilities, allows initiating a different form of atheism, where each individual is a “god”.

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1. Introduction

Antique authors wrote about the second generation of people who, driven by ὕβρις, didn't want to serve the immortal, and the history of Athens preserved the memory of ΚυλώνειοΆγος (Kilon's filth, about 640 BC), which, according to tradition, caused, the misfortunes of the "Godforsaken" city, demanding cleansing rituals that saved the inhabitants. Such connotations are due to the fact that the theomachist was once the god of his own separate tribe or another's tribe.

The modern individual is full of various paradoxes (new and old). One of these paradoxes is a synthesis of the idea of one's own exclusiveness coupled with desire, which is sometimes transformed into the belief that a person is not the only form of a rational being, and its existence is not limited only by the objective, material reality in which it resides. Ordinary and routine, erasing a special feeling of one's own life and draping the direct relationship of each individual to reality, were the phenomena that art and religion fought.¹

1.1. Historical excursus: metamorphoses of the concept of "atheism"

The term "ἄθεος" (godless) in the meaning of "abandoned by the gods" was first used by the poet Bacchillides in 480 BC emphasizing the tragedy of a person's life without the help of the "immortals", then entering the works of Pindar, Aeschylus, and Sophocles (Meert, 2017, p.47). Since the 5th century BC the Greek language includes the word "θρησκεία" to mean "Egyptian service to the gods". He believed that the gods of the Greeks, Egyptians, Persians and other peoples are the same fundamental "actors", differing only in their local name. This term "θρησκείαν" right up to Philo of Alexandria can be interpreted ambivalently, in the range from "higher wisdom" to "inappropriate superstitions" or "cheating".

New connotations of the term "ἄθεος" appear in the context of the political struggle in Athens of the era of the reforms of Pericles, the spread of practices of different schools "φιλοσοφία", accompanied by the adoption of the so-called "Psephisms of Diopifus" (c. 432 BC), that for the first time in history, approved the execution for all who dare to violate the "laws of the fathers" ("πάτριοννομος"), publicly discussing the "affairs of heaven", while not recognizing the gods recognized by the city. The term "ἄθεος" becomes a synonym for "wickedness" ("ἀσεβείας"), turning "φιλοσοφία" into a deadly occupation.

The Latin word "religio" as a collective designation of various practices of "worship of the gods" begins to spread, like the term "θρησκείαν", in the era of Cicero, who believed that this word means what allows people to serve the higher order of nature, which is a deity. In the 4th century AD e. for the first time in history, Christian practices of piety receive the status of religio (θρησκείαν), whereas in previous centuries they were qualified only as a criminal superstitio (superstition). Thus, the lexemes ἄθεος and religio are formed in different local subcultures of the Greco-Roman world.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the analysis of the ἄθεος phenomenon was undertaken by Kozhev (2007), who noted that in order to understand what atheism and theism are, it is necessary to

¹Fromm E. noted that a person was mired in everyday life and lost touch with himself, religion and art initially served as a method of avoiding everyday life, quenching the thirst for existence (drama, various issues that reveal the deep essence of the individual's life and the world around him). But in the end, they themselves became new forms of the same routine (Fromm, 2009, p.102).

understand the living atheist and theist with their life “attitudes”. Today, philosophers, sociologists, culturologists and religious scholars continue to discuss the “criteria of religiosity,” and the paradoxical realities of our time can sometimes be described, among other things, as a specific phenomenon of the “poor faith”. Today, the phrases “godless / atheistic arrows”, “suppliant godless / atheistic” and “godless / atheistic murder”, like “believing sorcerer / wizard” or “believing shaman”, are almost impossible to detect on the Internet, recording important shifts in our culture, at the same time there are paradoxical phrases “Orthodox atheist”, “evangelical atheist”, etc.

Modern studies suggest that in our days, despite the fact that the autonomy of atheism (as a form of consciousness and the factor of unification of people) from political and social discourse is affirmed, it is nevertheless directly related to acute issues in the field of politics and society (Cimino et al., 2020). Theism and atheism are two phenomena that today integrate into various spheres of human activity, which leads to a distortion of their definition and internal content.

1.2. Space and time of digital reality as an incentive for the formation of a “new deity”

With the development of civilization and scientific and technological progress, the state of man, as well as the world around him, became even more ambiguous. It has been criticized both by many classical authors and modern researchers for negative trends (Oele, 2020). The material situation of a person has clearly become more comfortable and more prosperous, however, the instrumental nature of progress pushes the individual to everyday life, loneliness, emptiness, alienation from oneself. Religion was able to compensate for the above spatio-temporal deficit by initiating autonomous space and time. However, this compensation tool has not become optimal and universal. Throughout the existence of religion, anti-religious protests have been present. Not only the institution was criticized, but also the object of worship - the gods or God. Over time, a different trend emerged - direct rivalry with religion and God (gods).

In the digital space, many of the limitations that a person has in the real world do not have their own strength, since it has local-temporal autonomy. Sovereignty is determined by specific qualities. The space of the digital world is characterized by a wider range of opportunities for the individual, and it itself is potentially limitless. As confirmation of the above, it is worth noting that there are modern studies that ask about the boundaries of social media, if it has them (Dyer, 2020).

Time also has its own autonomous characteristics: it either flows by its own rules, or can be completely absorbed in digital space. For example, in the video game industry, there is a tendency to create a game with the autonomy of time and events from the player (Vetushinskij, 2015).

Such independence from objective reality in a certain way affects the self-determination of the individual. It, together with the concept of exclusivity and the desire to exclude existential loneliness, gives rise to a special desire to find a different existence, different from that existing in others. These trends, implemented in the digital space with its special qualities and characteristics, lead to the formation of a desire to “become God”, to deify oneself and one’s qualities. In this case, a parallel can be drawn with the religious traditions of cannibalism and the assimilation of an absolute essence. This is not just a desire to acquire “divinity” and to get free from the limitations and tension of objective reality, the possibilities of which are provided by digital reality. The modern individual is in a kind of “existential vacuum”. Due to the lack of a clear vector of development, the individual becomes left to oneself, and, accordingly, acquires

legitimacy for any form of formation, i.e. one can become whatever one wants. But this is only an entelechial premise, which in the objective world is transformed into the following of necessity. Digital space, on the contrary, contributes to such a formation due to its qualities.

1.3. The specifics of the formation and characteristics of digital “gods”

It is worth noting some features of the generated digital “gods”. Firstly, this is a special anti-God mood, since the traditional idea of God / gods becomes the concept that puts a personal, anthropocentric “deification” into question. The very concept of God / gods as a certain phenomenon, standing above the individual (himself), is denied as rudimentary and ephemeral. Such a theomachy, where virtual-digital space is used as an instrument of proving one's power, is positioned as some great Promethean act, in particular in the aspect of creation and acting. The posthumanist and transhumanist traditions that are currently actualized in the consciousness of the individual not only do not correspond to the image of Prometheus or Daedalus (as figures of a non-rebellious creator), but rather correspond to the image of Sisyphus by Camus A. (as cited in Umbrello & Lombard, 2018). But if Sisyphus by Camus A. - it is one who has realized and accepted the absurdity of his existence and found its meaning, the modern individual not only does not accept the absurdity, but denies it or elevates it to the rank of the highest “destiny” and “achievement”. Secondly, the status of divinity is determined by the ordinary consciousness of the possibilities that exist in beings. They should be higher than those of ordinary “mortals”, and ideally they are limitless, at least formally. A surrogate of numinous feelings is formed. Often, one of the aspects of “divinity” is the presence of attributes, or rather the most popular, relevant and branded. Thanks to the virtual space, the intangible, emotional and psychosocial value of brands has been revealed, in particular for scientific study, (Mazzucchelli et al., 2019). Brand things become fetishes that give “divinity” to their owners, and logos, trademarks, brands, officials and the company that produces the first acquire totemic status.

Thirdly, an important place in “deification” is the aspect of worship and the presence of subjects, which contribute to the strengthening and establishment of “divinity”. Fourth, the formation of a digital “deity” is often initiated by internal self-conscious or unconscious self-hatred (one's own form and quality of existence) or because of a feeling of oppressive resentment. Such a tendency causes an urgent need to remake oneself in the first case and in the second case, to acquire qualities in order to drown out the feeling of sentiment.

It is worth pointing out that many individuals consider the digital space in which they reside as personal, created for them and only by them. A huge number of small, alternative worlds form an almost limitless digital space. This causes a sense of certain selectivity in the individual, leading to the idea of one's own superiority over others. Power, influence, freedom and strength are some of the most relevant topics in virtual space. It is interesting that, along with various hidden forms of overcoming the borders of freedom and power (for example, in DarkWeb closed spaces) (Gehl, 2016), a similar trend is observed in the general network (social media), where the “Overton window” (discourse) is a tool of destruction the borders.

² It is worth noting that often agnosticism is identified with atheism. Modern studies indicate that the discussion of agnosticism about God and his existence takes place within the framework of related

issues, such as discussions of the nature of faith or the immanence of God, etc., and suggests a different approach to this problem (Wilczewska, 2020). Indeed, agnosticism is not only not identical to theism or atheism, but can also serve as a party to the exclusion of the hyperbolic dualism of these phenomena.

Such digital “gods” create a special mythology around their person. But, as in any traditional mythology, there is a period of collision of different generations, representatives, classes of gods. This is a struggle for their own peculiarity among the digital “gods”, that is, for what makes them “deified”. This is a kind of “natural selection”, which does not always follow Charles Darwin, but more often F. Nietzsche. Sometimes, such borders and walls that are “bearing” both for the individual and for society are destroyed in pursuit of “own peculiarity”, in the struggle for a dominant position. Digital space gives birth not only to “gods” or “heroes” (but not as heroes of a traditional myth, representing a synthesis of collectively individual unconscious and conscious, who strive for development, to overcome the limiting (Leeming, 2020), but rather as a replica of mechanical artificial mythology created within the framework of the virtual space), but also of “beasts” / “monsters”, full of destructive and all-devouring trends.

2. Problem Statement

2.1. The research problem is the trend of transformation of the ratio religious and atheistic, namely under the influence of modern information and digital space.

2.2. Also, the problematic of this research is the sacralization of the personality, which takes the form of divinity within the digital space.

3. Research Questions

Main questions:

3.1. What effect does digital space have on the formation of a new, essentially mythological “divine” being.

3.2. Is this “divinity” a modern form of egocentrism, anthropocentrism and atheism?

4. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the specifics of the formation of a new ratio of religious and atheistic in the modern world, taking the form of “deification”, “god-like” personality as a form of atheism in digital space. To do this, it is supposed to identify and study the characteristic features of the phenomenon of digital “gods.”

5. Research Methods

In this work, we use the dialectic method in combination with elements of intellectual modeling to identify and consider a new form of atheism in the form of artificial myth-making within the framework of virtual space. The historical approach involves the analysis of metamorphoses of both the concepts of atheism and theism, and their internal content. The analytical approach reveals the immanent tendencies of modern myth-making, in particular, within the framework of the tendency to “deify” one’s own

individuality in digital space as a form of atheism. Elements of ethical and psychological approaches are used in this work to identify the specifics of human behavior and thinking as a digital “god”. The comparative method and religious approach were used to identify the specifics of the myth-making of the modern individual within the framework of virtual space. It is worth noting that modern researchers suggest that it is necessary to study atheism not only from the perspective of intelligence and philosophy, but also to take into account its emotional, material and socio-political foundations, as well as pay attention to the role of the media in its formation as a collective self-identification (Chalfant, 2020). This approach to the issue is reflected in this work.

6. Findings

6.1. The phenomenon of atheism must be sought not only in relation to theism, but primarily in the aspect of the “living” manifestation as individual self-determination and self-awareness.

6.2. In the modern world, there is a paradoxical mixture of atheistic and religious, in particular in the issue of religious self-identity.

6.3. Digital space is one of the methods for transforming negative trends. It has local-temporal autonomy. It forms the self-determination of a “different” level (different from an ordinary person) as a specific form of atheism.

6.4. The modern individual is in a state of “existential vacuum”, so the individual in his formation and definition is left to oneself.

6.5. Digital "gods" have characteristic features. In digital space its own specific artificial mythology is forming.

7. Conclusion

7.1. The question of the relationship between religious and atheistic has acquired new forms of opposition, in which the atheistic takes the form of a religious.

7.2. Digital space contributes to the formation of artificial mythological representations that are associated with the “deification” of anthropocentric and selfish tendencies of the individual.

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